

# MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK

January 29, 2007, 1:00 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK BOARD ROOM  
HELENA, MONTANA

non-official minutes-not approved by board

January 29, 2007

Department of Livestock Board Room

## Call To Order

Chairman Bill Hedstrom called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

## Attendance:

Board of Livestock members present: Bill Hedstrom, Meg Smith, Linda Nielsen, Janice French, George Hammond and Lee Cornwell. John Paugh was absent.

Department personnel present: George Harris, Central Services Division Administrator; Carol Olmstead, Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau Chief; Dan Turcotte, Acting Milk & Egg Bureau Chief/Sanitarian; John Grainger, Brand Enforcement Division Administrator; Dr. Jeanne Rankin, Acting State Veterinarian, Animal Health Division; Rob Tierney, Bison Management AHD; and Sherry Rust, Executive Secretary.

## Guest Recognition

Public present: Errol Rice, Montana Stockgrowers Association; Bill Meyers, producer; Jim Hogan, MSGA; Steve Roth, MSGA; Scott Chenock, Montana Wildlife Federation; Wally Taylor, MSGA; Charlene Schuster, Montana Beef Council; Taylor Brown, Northern Ag Networks; Tami Jo Blake, Agri-News; Ken Torgerson, farmer & producer; Pat Flowers, Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Bill O'Connell; John Munding, DOL, FWP Wildlife Consultant; Kurt Alt, FWP; Clarence Gilmore, Brian Lawson, John C Adtwager, Allison Baldwin; Amanda Coppola; Stephanie Nance, Buffalo Field Campaign; Hal Harper, Governor's Office; Dick Murphy, Park County producer; Brent Sinnema, Gallatin County livestock producer; Jerry Leep, Gallatin County dairy producer; Tom Lane, producer; Jake Cummins, Montana Farm Bureau, Ned Zimmerman, MSGA; Nancy Schlepp, MFB; Les Graham, Montana Livestock Auctions; Jim Cortney, Carter County Commissioner.

## Approval of Minutes

Lee Cornwell moved to approve the minutes of the December 28, 2006 Board conference call meeting. Linda Nielsen seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

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## New Grade Description

The Board discussed the temporary change from grade 11 to 12 for the Board executive secretary as approved during the December conference call.

The Board also discussed a temporary change for the Centralized Service Division Administrator from grade 19 to grade 21 in recognition of the additional duties assumed in the absence of an executive officer.

**Lee Cornwell moved to temporarily increase the grade for the CSD Administrator to 21 from January 1 until such time as an executive officer is hired. Jan French seconded and the motion carried unanimously.**

## FWP Proposed Expansion Bison Hunt-EAP

Pat Flowers, Region Three Supervisor Fish, Wildlife & Parks, explained the need for an Environmental Assessment prior to implementation of any of the proposed expanded hunt. He reviewed the proposal and options for increased hunting opportunities for bison in the Greater Yellowstone Area. Options include three additional hunting areas outside the Park, and a possible early season hunt in some or all of these areas. The Board requested clarification of parts of the proposal and discussed risks versus benefits. Board members also reaffirmed their opposition to any movement to expand the area where Yellowstone bison can move out of the Park.

**Meg Smith made a motion to not consider opening the EA process. George Hammond seconded.**

Board discussion and questions followed. It was explained that there is no monetary responsibility to the Department for the EA. The plan cannot be implemented until an EA is completed and then only with Board approval. Questions concerning the economic impact were also discussed. The current EA for the IBMP clearly states the impact to the State if the Brucellosis free class was lost. Discussion also centered on the IBMP, the 3000 bison "trigger number" and complete implementation of the IBMP.

Hal Harper, Governor's Office, explained the Governor's views on the hunt and bison disease control issues.

There were numerous comments from producers and the

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public present at the meeting:

*Brent Sinnema*, producer, runs a herd on an allotment on the Taylors Fork Drainage from July 10 to October 1. He has not seen any bison in that area in the 25 to 30 years that his family has run cattle there. Concerned that bison in that area means he is out. His production would be cut in half since he has no room on his home range for the cattle run in that area.

*Tom Lee*, Livingston, concerned that Montana as a premier seed stock state, and is against any plan that would jeopardize the state's Brucellosis free status.

*Jim Courtney*, Carter County Commissioner, agreed that producers look to the Board to protect producers.

*Bill O'Connell*, Bozeman bison advocate, felt this could be a compatible thing-a few bison can coexist with the cattle.

*Bill Meyers*, producer, disagreed, bison have never been in the Taylor Fork drainage and hauling them in could raise potential exposure. What if all the bison are not found & killed during the hunt. Board has done a good job so far.

*Brian Lawson*, Buffalo Field Campaign, reminded the Board that bison are not the only risk, brucellosis is in Montana elk also pose another risk.

*Kirt Ault*, FWP, replied elk pose a minimal (5%) risk compared to the Yellowstone bison herd.

*Tom Lane*, producer, agreed the Board has done a good job of disease control and compared the BSE incident in Canada to the potential harm from a positive brucellosis incident in Montana.

*Hal Harper*, IBMP implemented and operated under approval by the Governor of the state of Montana. There are better way to protect the brucellosis free status. This is about hunting as a management tool.

*Watney Taylor*, Wyoming border producer, eradication is the answer as would be for any cattle herd with brucellosis it would be depopulated, should be done with Yellowstone herd..

*Taoni Riggs*, BFC, has researched brucellosis and put forth her opinion on risk and promoted common sense management.

*Jerry Leep*, dairy industry, explained how drastically the dairy business would be impacted with the loss of the brucellosis free status.

*Bill O'Connell* questioned private property rights as pertaining

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to bison.

*Ken Torgerson*, Malta, observed that the Park needs a range and herd management plan.

Pat Flowers again explained that the whole plan is contingent upon leasing land from RTR. The EA and the hunt may never go forward unless RTR agrees to the lease.

Jan French called for a question.

Chairman Hedstrom commented that Robert's Rules will not allow a motion in a negative form and requested Meg to modify her motion to a positive form.

**Meg Smith moved to modify the motion to approve the proposed Environmental Assessment. Jan French seconded.**

Discussion : Meg Smith explained that she sees the whole proposal as an expansion of the disease.

Chairman Hedstrom suggested the motion could be amended to eliminate or add to EA once the motion on the floor was passed. Discussion continued.

**The motion carried unanimously.**

**Lee Cornwell moved to amend the motion to approve the Environmental Assessment eliminating the Taylor Fork area from the EA. George Hammond seconded and the motion carried in a voice vote.. Linda Nielsen voted yes; Lee Cornwell, yes; Meg Smith, yes; Jan French, yes; George Hammond, no. John Paugh was absent.**

Meg Smith requested that Mr. Clyde Peterson be placed on the next meeting agenda to explain the obligations and duties of the Board concerning the IBMP. The Chair agreed to place it on the next agenda.

Federal bison funding was discussed. The Board requested producer organizations to contact their Congressmen on this issue. The Board reviewed the options open to continue bison operations should federal funding fail.

## **Recess**

The meeting recessed at 2:30 p.m. for a break

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## Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 3:00. p.m.

### Temporary Upgrade

The Board discussed the temporary upgrade for the Centralized Services Administrator to include Mr. Harris assuming Acting Executive Officer duties until an Executive Officer is in place. Mr. Harris will then resume his CSD administrative position with his previous pay grade.

**Lee Cornwell moved that George Harris be moved up to a grade 21 on the pay scale assuming the position of Temporary Acting Executive Officer until a new Executive Officer is in place. Linda Nielsen seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

### Vacancy Updates

The Board discussed the vacant positions for State Veterinarian and Executive Officer. Meg Smith requested a timeline for opening and hiring these positions. The timeline is as follows:

State Veterinarian position is open and will close on the 28th of February.

- March 12 & 13 - BOARD Meeting (moved up from March 19 & 20)
- March 13 Interview State Vet applicants at 1:00 p.m. following the Board meeting.

Executive Officer recruitment will open February 15 and close March 16th. Screening will be completed and the Board will interview the top 3 to 5 applicants.

- March 26/27 – tentative dates for the Board to interview applicants.

**Jan French moved to have the full Board interview candidates for both the State Veterinarian and Executive Officer positions. George Hammond seconded and the motion carried unanimously.**

The Board discussed the letter received from Senator Cobb questioning the Board regarding possible interference in hiring within the Department. Chairman Hedstrom said he responded to all questions presented. Copies were provided

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to Board members at the meeting.

## Temporary Office Help

A request was made to the Board for temporary receptionist to answer and direct phone calls to alleviate the additional workload to the executive assistant and human resource positions. It was agreed that any temporary help would be properly trained to represent the Department and to forward questions to the appropriate division.

**Lee Cornwell moved to contract for a temporary receptionist. George Hammond seconded and the motion carried unanimously.**

## Bison Budget Shortfall

The Board reviewed the issue of the federal bison funding and how to continue should funding fail. Meg Smith asked the producers and producer organizations to provide input as to how the Board should proceed.

## GAO Visit

Dr Rankin informed the Board of the GAO visit to Yellowstone Park to observe bison operations and review the situation with involved agencies. She was just informed of the visit which is scheduled for the week of January 22nd. Rob Tierney will represent the Department during the week, Dr. Rankin will be at the open house and George Harris will be available by phone for any financial questions.

## Milk & Egg Bureau Chief

The Chairman announced that Dan Turcotte accepted the Bureau Chief position as offered by the Board.

## **Adjournment**

Chairman Bill Hedstrom adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.

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BILL HEDSTROM, CHAIRMAN  
BOARD OF LIVESTOCK